Executive Council
Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs
March 13, 2008

Province Hosts Third Annual Aboriginal Women's Conference

Economic opportunity will be the focus of the third annual Aboriginal Women's Conference, *The Path to Economic Prosperity*, now taking place. The conference is being held at the Capital Hotel in St. John's from March 12 to 14.

The conference will bring together 40 Aboriginal women from across the province, representatives from the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, Aboriginal governments, community groups and business leaders.

"There has been significant effort by this government to address the unique challenges facing Aboriginal women and to work to achieve the recommendations that were highlighted at the two previous Aboriginal Women's Conferences and the National Aboriginal Women's Summit that took place in June 2007," said the Honourable Joan Burke, Minister Responsible for the Status of Women. "This conference will once again give Aboriginal women a forum to learn about provincial opportunities and voice recommendations to government officials and community and business leaders."

The Williams Government has advanced a number of the recommendations made at the previous conferences. In Budget 2007, funding for violence prevention grants to Aboriginal communities was doubled to $200,000 annually and funding for the annual conference was increased from $30,000 to $60,000 annually.

The planning of the conference was done in partnership with the Women's Policy Office and a steering committee made up of seven women from Aboriginal groups across the province. Equal representation from Innu, Inuit, Mik'maq, Métis, and Urban Aboriginal groups in Newfoundland and Labrador will be present at the conference.

"The opportunities and possibilities for Aboriginal women are growing every year," said the Honourable Patty Pottle, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. "By meeting and discussing ideas and issues that concern us as Aboriginal women, we will be on the path to more fulfilled and richer lives."

The idea for the Aboriginal Women's Conference stemmed from a tour of the north coast of Labrador by the Honourable Danny Williams, Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador and Minister Burke in 2004. They saw first hand the complexity and diversity of the issues facing Aboriginal women.

The first province-wide Aboriginal Women's Conference, *The Path to the Good Life,* was held in March 2006 in Happy Valley-Goose Bay. Some of the main topics raised were education, youth, employment, violence, and health care. The second conference, *The Path to the Good Life: Moving Forward, Building Strength,* was held in Stephenville in November 2006 and discussed issues relating to the justice system and poverty reduction.

"The conference is important because it provides Aboriginal women with the financial and organizational supports they need to come together from all over Newfoundland and Labrador to discuss issues, network with other Aboriginal groups and make recommendations to Provincial and Aboriginal governments" said Minister Burke.

Following the conference, a report will be released outlining the concerns, suggestions and

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recommendations raised by Aboriginal women during their meetings. This report will be made available to the public and will be posted on the Women's Policy Office website - www.gov.nl.ca/exec/wpo/.

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